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REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATING TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: AN INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

Information received from the United Nations system

UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH (UNITAR) AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Introduction

1. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) was established in 1965 as an autonomous body within the United Nations with the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations through appropriate training and research. UNITAR is governed by a Board of Trustees and is headed by an Executive Director. The Institute is supported by voluntary contributions from Governments, intergovernmental organizations, and foundations and other non-governmental sources.

2. UNITAR manages a number of programmes listed at the end of this paper. The training activities that deal directly with indigenous peoples' representatives are part of the Programme in Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy. These and the other training and research activities of this programme are detailed below.

3. UNITAR has the following functions:

(a) To conduct training programmes in multilateral diplomacy and international cooperation for diplomats accredited to the United Nations and national officials involved in work related to United Nations activities;

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(b) To carry out a wide range of training programmes in the field of social and economic development (training in the field of environmental management has become the fastest growing sector of UNITAR's work);

(c) To carry out result-oriented research, in particular, research on and for training, and to develop pedagogical materials including distance learning training packages, workbooks, software and video training packs;

(d) To establish and strengthen cooperation with facilities and academic institutions, in particular for the development of research on and for training.

UNITAR PROGRAMME IN PEACEMAKING AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

I. BACKGROUND

4. The UNITAR Programme in Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy was initiated in 1993 to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations efforts in conflict prevention and resolution. Since then, the programme has expanded to provide a range of research and training involving mid- and senior-level United Nations staff, diplomats, minority and indigenous peoples' representatives, and civil society and military personnel.

II. MAIN ACTIVITIES

A. Training Programme to Enhance the Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Capacities of Minority and Indigenous Peoples' Representatives

5. Based on the requests of indigenous peoples' representatives at consultations in Geneva and on the recommendations of several special rapporteurs, this project was developed to provide advanced training in conflict analysis and negotiation to key representatives of minority and indigenous peoples. The focus is on a problem-solving negotiation approach to strengthen participants' capacity to negotiate more effectively to have their needs met, while also promoting constructive relationships between members of their communities and those in the dominant community. Indigenous and minority experts, as well as other specialists, including representatives of regional organizations, serve as resource persons for the training programme. The international training programme is conducted annually at the time of the annual session of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations and the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, held at the United Nations Office at Geneva. As well, a regional training programme is conducted in a different part of the world each year.

6. The first international programme, held in August 2000 in Geneva, was enthusiastically received by minority and indigenous peoples' representatives who strongly urged that the programme be held annually both in Geneva and at the regional level, to give their colleagues around the world the opportunity to strengthen their skills in negotiation and the peaceful resolution of conflict. A second Geneva programme was held in 2001. The Geneva programme

works with the United Nations and other organizations to identify individuals participating in the Working Group on Indigenous Populations who could best contribute to and benefit from the training programme. This programme is conducted in English.

7. The first UNITAR Regional Training Programme to Enhance the Conflict and Peacebuilding Capacities of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives of the Americas was held in Mexico City in December 2001. Training was conducted in Spanish and English. The programme is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

8. Participants are selected based on experience, recommendation and nomination. For information on this training programme, please contact:

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B. UNITAR-IPA Fellowship Programme in Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy

9. This annual programme (now in its ninth year) offers advanced training in conflict analysis, negotiation and mediation to mid- and senior-level United Nations staff, diplomats and representatives of regional organizations to strengthen institutional capacities in these areas. The primary focus is on preventing and resolving disputes through the United Nations. Senior United Nations staff members, including special representatives of the Secretary-General and renowned academics and practitioners, serve as resource persons for the programme to discuss the latest knowledge and practice in the field.

10. The two-week training offers a comprehensive course on how disputes begin, escalate and are resolved. Case studies of conflict situations are analysed to develop an understanding of the issues, obstacles and problems which occur. The programme also offers advanced practice in the skills needed to carry out effective preventive diplomacy and peacemaking. The programme is organized in cooperation with the International Peace Academy in New York.

11. The programme is supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom.

C. Programme for Briefing and Debriefing Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General

12. This project is being carried out to preserve and pass on the valuable lessons and experience of special and personal representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General and to ensure that these are used to refine and enhance United Nations peace operations. The project has five components: (a) the debriefing of current and past special representatives through in-depth interviews; (b) the preparation of a handbook for special representatives, consisting of a well-organized summary of lessons and recommendations from these interviews; (c) a set of DVDs and videos from the interviews, which will accompany the handbook; (d) an annual seminar for special representatives and senior United Nations staff to provide a forum to share experiences and lessons and to promote dialogue; and (e) a more systematic briefing programme based on the recommendations of special representatives. The handbook and DVD/videos will form one part of the briefing programme for new special representatives. All of these activities are being carried out in close cooperation with the senior staff in relevant United Nations departments. The process of carrying out in-depth interviews with special representatives is well under way and is proving a rich source of useful data. A first draft of the handbook and sample of video/DVDs will be completed in October 2002.

13. The first "Seminar for Current Special and Personal Representatives and Envoys of the United Nations Secretary-General: Enhancing the Implementation of Peace Operations" took place in Mont Pélerin, Switzerland, in March 2001. The meeting was attended by the Secretary-General, 22 of the 26 current full-time Special and Personal Representatives and Envoys, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the High Commissioner for Refugees, the Under-Secretaries-General for the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Administrator of UNDP, representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, other senior officials of the United Nations, as well as senior representatives of donor Governments. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland hosted a dinner in honour of the Secretary-General and his representatives. The second seminar will take place in October 2002.

14. The programme is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom.

D. UNITAR Regional Training Programme to Enhance Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Africa

15. This programme has been developed as an extension of the Fellowship Programme (mentioned above) to provide training at the regional level. It includes participants from the Foreign and Defence Ministries of African States, as well as key staff from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the region. It focuses on the pressing need to improve the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa.

16. African experts from across the continent serve as resource persons. The programme addresses the challenges faced by practitioners and decision-makers in their efforts to assess and respond to the proliferation of emerging crises in the region. It is designed to strengthen coordination and collaboration among actors and institutions and to provide a cadre of persons who could be called upon to use their skills to assist peace processes in Africa. The first regional training programme was held in October 2000 in Dakar and the second in October 2001 in Addis Ababa. These programmes have received funding from the International Development Agency of Canada, the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom.

E. UNITAR-RPTC Subregional Training Programme to Enhance Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Southern Africa

17. This UNITAR-RPTC Training Programme to Enhance Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Southern Africa was established to provide advanced training in conflict analysis, prevention and resolution to middle- and senior-level professional staff from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence of member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In addition, it also invites the participation of relevant members of staff from the SADC secretariat, as well as representatives of key non-governmental organizations focusing on peacemaking in southern Africa.

18. This programme is co-organized with the SADC Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre (RPTC) and focuses on the pressing need to address issues of peacemaking in the southern African region and the challenges faced by practitioners and decision makers in their efforts to assess and respond to the current and potential conflict situations in the subregion. The training programme takes place at RPTC headquarters in Harare. The first programme was held in March 2000 and the second in February 2001. These programmes have been funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

F. Network for the Promotion of African Principles of Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation/Réseau pour la promotion des principes africains de résolution des conflits et de réconciliation (REPARCOR)

19. The network has been established between intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working to promote the revitalization and use of African cultural approaches to peacemaking. The Network seeks to promote the use of the positive cultural values, knowledge and skills that exist within African indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and reconciliation. The Network, which has focal points in all subregions of Africa, collaborates with initiatives that seek to draw upon African cultural values to build a culture of peace on the African continent. For additional information, please refer to the Network's web site at www.africanprinciples.org. The initial funding for the establishment of the Network was received from the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom.

20. In addition to the Programme in Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy, UNITAR manages the following programmes: International Affairs Management; Chemicals and Waste Management; Climate Change; Information Systems for Sustainable Development; International Training Centre for Local Actors - Decentralized Cooperation; International Migration Policy;

Environmental Law Programme; Legal Aspects of Debt, Financial Management, and Negotiation; Foreign Economic Relations; Training for Civil Personnel in Peacekeeping Operations on the Special Needs of Women and Children in Conflict; Correspondence Instruction in Peacekeeping Operations; Conference Series on Peacekeeping organized by UNITAR, the Institute for Political Studies (IPS) and the Japanese Institute for International Affairs (JIIA); UNITAR Hiroshima Programmes.

For more information on UNITAR programmes, please consult the web site, or contact UNITAR at the following address:

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